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Addendum

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Water, sanitation and human settlements: local action

I. Introduction

1. Local governments are key stakeholders in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Local governments are using various tools and implementing strategies to achieve local sustainability.

2. However, local governments are concerned about the slow process of decentralization and its implications on pro-poor governance. Local governments are concerned about the lack of awareness of the implications of privatization of services and the absence of solution-oriented dialogue between various spheres of government and other stakeholders. These concerns manifest themselves, as was noted in the process leading up to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development,[1] in poverty, insecurity and violence, environmental degradation and in exacerbation of the impact of disasters (both natural and man-made). These are key barriers to sustainable development. At the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (ICLEI) wishes to continue to emphasize these points and believes that any progress made needs to be assessed against these barriers to local sustainability.

3. Local governments also noted, in Johannesburg, that progress can be made to address these barriers by creating viable local economies, just and peaceful communities, resilient communities and by improving the efficiency or reducing our consumption of resources (global common goods). Within the water and sanitation framework, this means ensuring that sustainable supply mechanisms providing affordable water for all are implemented, that local and regional conflicts over water resources are resolved, and that issues of water-demand management are addressed. Such a multifaceted programme can only be dealt with under the auspices of an integrated water resources management system. Similarly, integrated management of water and sanitation implies integrated planning and management of settlements. Local governments see the objectives of improving access to water, sanitation and housing as intrinsically linked.

4. Post-Johannesburg, local governments have convened regional meetings in Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa to examine the commitments made in Johannesburg. Governments, at all levels worldwide, are now much more conscious of their roles and responsibilities than before Johannesburg. These regional summits were unanimous in calling for the strengthening of local government through capacity-building, and for legislation and policy frameworks to support decentralization. In some of these meetings, for example most recently at the AfriCities Summit[2] in Yaoundé in December 2003 and at the World Congress of Local Governments[3] in Athens in November 2003, various local implementation strategies and tools were reviewed and debated.

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[1] *Dialogue Paper by Local Authorities — Accelerating Sustainable Development: Local Action Moves the World* (E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/6/Add.5).

[2] http://www.pdm-net.org/africites/new/eng/summit.htm.

[3] http://www.iclei.org/worldcongress/.

5. Local governments and their associations were also present at the third World Water Forum, held in Osaka, Kyoto and Shiga in March 2003. However, cities and municipalities are extremely concerned about the general absence of reference to local government in the final official documents. The follow-up to the Water Forum and other international meetings needs to be further shared with local government decision makers.

6. As in ministerial meetings, mayoral meetings have also drafted declarations and action plans, for example in Johannesburg,[4] Ñuñoa,[5] Kolding,[6] Sydney[7] and Yaoundé. These texts reflect the awareness of the need to move away from the business as usual approach. The time for long speeches and presentations is past. For the almost 800 million urban-dwellers who lack access to a safe and sustainable supply of drinking water, for the close to one billion people who lack adequate sanitation, and for the slum-dwellers, local governments wish to present concrete action points.

2. Water and sanitation

7. Local governments face the following challenges:

(a) Access to international, multilateral and bilateral finance for infrastructure is very limited. In many regions this is related to foreign exchange risks and the inability of local governments to create a package to attract competitive rates for finance;

(b) Particularly in cases where decentralization and water sector reform are being undertaken simultaneously, it is not surprising that many local decision makers fail to understand what the expectations are for a sustainable service delivery;

(c) The impact of service provision (or the lack of it) on the lives of women and men is different. From a local government perspective, effective and efficient tools to deal with gender issues in delivery of water and sanitation services are still not widely available;

(d) The processes and tools for the sustainable supply of water and sanitation, which may include various forms of partnerships and even privatization of the services, are not readily available. The current understanding of these mechanisms in local political circles is extremely limited and the consequences of poorly informed decisions can have serious long-term consequences.

8. Local governments therefore call for the following actions:

(a) A thorough assessment by local governments of the recommendations made by the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure[8] along with the development of tools and mechanisms to increase financing of local water and sanitation infrastructure is urgently needed;

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[4] http://www.iclei.org/lgs/johannesburg_call.htm, http://www.iclei.org/rioplusten/wssd_docs.html.

[5] http://www.nunoa.cl/iclei/documentos/carta/.

[6] http://www.kl.dk/koldingconference.

[7] http://www.iula-aspac.org/Index.htm.

[8] http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/download/CamdessusReport.pdf.

(b) Decentralization and the process of engaging local governments with and by other stakeholders has a direct impact on water governance. The Local Agenda 21 participatory processes[9] developed by numerous local governments worldwide need continued support at all levels to ensure that appropriate action in the field of water and sanitation is undertaken. Building on Local Agenda 21 experiences could address issues of gender and other inequities;

(c) Capacity-building of local leadership to make long-term decisions in a short-term job is crucial for the sustainable development of local infrastructure;

(d) Housing programmes that help low-income households afford better provision for water and sanitation are essential;

(e) The inhabitants of informal settlements must be provided with tenure, allowing utilities to extend provision for piped water and sewer connections;

(f) Good urban governance is a key factor. In this field we wish to recognize the excellent work of the UN-Habitat campaign promoting principles of urban governance.[10] Similarly we wish to call for further support of the Dialogue on Water and Governance launched in Johannesburg in 2002 as an implementation partnership;[11]

(g) Capacity-building of local government leaders is crucial to achieve full understanding of the implications of various options for service delivery, including privatization and partnerships;

(h) More specific information-sharing, enabling cities to learn from each other, is needed.

3. Human settlements

9. Efforts to achieve the target of improving the lives of slum-dwellers will also increase the likelihood of achieving the targets on water and sanitation. Indeed, targeting water and sanitation without dealing with access to shelter and the development of appropriate settlement patterns alone is unlikely to be a successful strategy. The concerns in this sector are very similar to the concerns raised for water and sanitation: finance, governance (including decentralization) and poverty. The current capacity-building of local governments in these areas is not adequate.

10. Local governments face the following challenges:

(a) As with water and sanitation, the mandate of local governments to deal with illegal or unplanned settlements is often unclear;

(b) Urbanization is occurring at an increasingly rapid pace. Urban populations are growing through a significant internal migration from rural to urban centres;

(c) Environmental standards in housing development continue to be poor or even non-existent;

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[9] *Second Local Agenda Survey Report. World Summit for Sustainable Development Background Paper #15.*

[10] http://www.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/.

[11] www.gwpforum.org/gwp/library/Governance.pdf.

(d) Homelessness and social housing problems are increasing, while expenditure on social housing is falling. Homelessness is not only a quantitative question of producing housing: poverty, safety and security also need to be addressed;

(e) A number of policy gaps related to land use and mobility planning, public transport, sustainable housing, building regulation and environmental health continue to exist.

11. Local governments therefore call for the following action:

(a) It must be recognized that informal and illegal settlements exist in some of our communities and require basic services. Service delivery should therefore be a commitment of all stakeholders, including all levels of government;

(b) National housing standards need to be re-examined to ensure that they are appropriate to the various regions. Furthermore, national support is required to ensure that the set standards are appropriately adhered to;

(c) Local involvement in national, multilateral and bilateral schemes that make housing affordable for all is essential;

(d) National development strategies that foster dialogue and cooperation between urban and rural local jurisdictions need to be developed to ensure greater regional coherence;

(e) In order to support sustainable patterns of consumption and production, formal networks of local governments to purchase goods and services (such as public transport, provision of shelter, or delivery of water and sanitation) that meet sustainability criteria should be encouraged.

4. Conclusions

12. The increasingly urbanized societies worldwide require new directions to deal with the growing deficits in sanitation, access to water and shelter. Equitable and sustainable access to water, sanitation and shelter for the poor can only be realized through strong decentralized local leadership and an informed, supportive citizenry. Transparency, accountability and inclusion, the fundamentals of Local Agenda 21 processes, are key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

13. The international community is not as engaged in urban as in rural issues. This has to be of concern to everyone given that the majority of the world's population will soon be living in urban settlements. A balanced focus on meeting the needs of both rural and urban-dwellers is required.

14. Local governments can and will perform, but they need the active engagement and support of all stakeholders in order to be able to do so efficiently.